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Admirals All



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ADMIRALS ALL

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Tenth Edition

ADMIRALS ALL
AND OTHER VERSES

BY

HENRY NEWBOLT

LONDON

ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET

1898

TO
ANDREW LANG

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ADMIRALS ALL

A Song of Sea Kings

EFFINGHAM, Grenville, Raleigh, Drake,
Here's to the bold and free!
Benbow, Collingwood, Byron, Blake,
Hail to the Kings of the Sea!
Admirals all, for England's sake,
Honour be yours and fame!
And honour, as long as waves shall break,
To Nelson's peerless name!

*Admirals all, for England's sake,
Honour be yours and fame!
And honour, as long as waves shall break,
To Nelson's peerless name!*

Essex was fretting in Cadiz Bay
With the galleons fair in sight;
Howard at last must give him his way,
And the word was passed to fight.

Never was schoolboy gayer than he,
Since holidays first began :
He tossed his bonnet to wind and sea,
And under the guns he ran.

Drake nor devil nor Spaniard feared,
Their cities he put to the sack ;
He singed His Catholic Majesty's beard,
And harried his ships to wrack.
He was playing at Plymouth a rubber of bowls
When the great Armada came ;
But he said, " They must wait their turn, good
souls,"
And he stooped and finished the game.

Fifteen sail were the Dutchmen bold,
Duncan he had but two ;
But he anchored them fast where the Texel
shoaled,
And his colours aloft he flew.
" I've taken the depth to a fathom," he cried,
" And I'll sink with a right good will :
For I know when we're all of us under the tide
My flag will be fluttering still."

Splinters were flying above, below,
When Nelson sailed the Sound :
" Mark you, I wouldn't be elsewhere now,"
Said he, " for a thousand pound !"

The Admiral's signal bade him fly,
But he wickedly wagged his head :
He clapped the glass to his sightless eye,
And "I'm damned if I see it!" he said.

Admirals all, they said their say
(The echoes are ringing still).
Admirals all, they went their way
To the haven under the hill.
But they left us a kingdom none can take—
The realm of the circling sea—
To be ruled by the rightful sons of Blake,
And the Rodneys yet to be.

*Admirals all, for England's sake,
Honour be yours and fame!
And honour, as long as waves shall break,
To Nelson's peerless name!*

SAN STEFANO

A Ballad of the Bold "Menelaus"

It was morning at St. Helen's, in the great and
gallant days,

And the sea beneath the sun glittered wide,
When the frigate set her courses, all a-shimmer
in the haze,

And she hauled her cable home and took the
tide.

She'd a right fighting company, three hundred
men and more,

Nine and forty guns in tackle running free;
And they cheered her from the shore for her
colours at the fore,

When the bold *Menelaus* put to sea.

*She'd a right fighting company, three hundred men
and more,*

*Nine and forty guns in tackle running free;
And they cheered her from the shore for her colours
at the fore,*

When the bold Menelaus put to sea.

She was clear of Monte Cristo, she was heading
for the land,

When she spied a pennant red and white and
blue;

They were foemen, and they knew it, and they'd
half a league in hand,
But she flung aloft her royals, and she flew.
She was nearer, nearer, nearer, they were caught
beyond a doubt,
But they slipped her into Orbetello Bay,
And the lubbers gave a shout as they paid their
cables out,
With the guns grinning round them where
they lay.

Now, Sir Peter was a captain of a famous fighting
race,
Son and grandson of an admiral was he ;
And he looked upon the batteries, he looked upon
the chase,
And he heard the shout that echoed out to sea.
And he called across the decks, "Ay! the cheering
might be late
If they kept it till the *Menelaus* runs ;
Bid the master and his mate heave the lead and
lay her straight
For the prize lying yonder by the guns!"

When the summer moon was setting, into
Orbetello Bay
Came the *Menelaus* gliding like a ghost ;
And her boats were manned in silence, and in
silence pulled away,
And in silence every gunner took his post.

With a volley from her broadside the citadel she
 woke,
And they hammered back like heroes all the
 night;
But before the morning broke she had vanished
 through the smoke
With her prize upon her quarter grappled
 tight.

It was evening at St. Helen's, in the great and
 gallant time,
And the sky behind the down was flushing far;
And the flags were all a-flutter, and the bells
 were all a-chime,
When the frigate cast her anchor off the bar.
She'd a right fighting company, three hundred
 men and more,
Nine and forty guns in tackle running free;
And they cheered her from the shore for her
 colours at the fore,
When the bold *Menelaus* came from sea.

*She'd a right fighting company, three hundred men
 and more,
Nine and forty guns in tackle running free;
And they cheered her from the shore for her colours
 at the fore,
When the bold Menelaus came from sea.*

DRAKE'S DRUM

DRAKE he's in his hammock an' a thousand
mile away,

(Capten, art tha sleepin' there below?)

Slung atween the round shot in Nombre Dios
Bay,

An' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe.

Yarnder lumes the island, yarnder lie the ships,

Wi' sailor lads a-dancin' heel-an'-toe,

An' the shore-lights flashin', an' the night-tide
dashin',

He sees et arl so plainly as he saw et long ago.

Drake he was a Devon man, an' rüled the Devon
seas,

(Capten, art tha sleepin' there below?),

Rovin' tho' his death fell, he went wi' heart at
ease,

An' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe.

"Take my drum to England, hang et by the
shore,

Strike et when your powder's runnin' low ;

If the Dons sight Devon, I'll quit the port o'
Heaven,

An' drum them up the Channel as we drummed
them long ago."

Drake he's in his hammock till the great Armadas
come,

(Capten, art tha sleepin' there below?),
Slung atween the round shot, listenin' for the
drum,

An' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe.
Call him on the deep sea, call him up the Sound,
Call him when ye sail to meet the foe ;
Where the old trade's plyin' an' the old flag flyin'
They shall find him ware an' wakin', as they
found him long ago !

THE FIGHTING TÊMÉRAIRE

It was eight bells ringing,
For the morning watch was done,
And the gunner's lads were singing
As they polished every gun.
It was eight bells ringing,
And the gunner's lads were singing,
For the ship she rode a-swinging,
As they polished every gun.

*Oh! to see the linstock lighting,
Téméraire! Téméraire!
Oh! to hear the round shot biting,
Téméraire! Téméraire!
Oh! to see the linstock lighting,
And to hear the round shot biting,
For we're all in love with fighting
On the Fighting Téméraire.*

It was noontide ringing,
And the battle just begun,
When the ship her way was winging,
As they loaded every gun.

It was noontide ringing,
When the ship her way was winging,
And the gunner's lads were singing
As they loaded every gun.

*There'll be many grim and gory,
Téméraire! Téméraire!
There'll be few to tell the story,
Téméraire! Téméraire!
There'll be many grim and gory,
There'll be few to tell the story,
But we'll all be one in glory
With the Fighting Téméraire.*

There's a far bell ringing
At the setting of the sun,
And a phantom voice is singing
Of the great days done.
There's a far bell ringing,
And a phantom voice is singing
Of renown for ever clinging
To the great days done.

*Now the sunset breezes shiver,
Téméraire! Téméraire!
And she's fading down the river,
Téméraire! Téméraire!
Now the sunset breezes shiver,
And she's fading down the river,
But in England's song for ever
She's the Fighting Téméraire.*

HAWKE

IN seventeen hundred and fifty-nine,
When Hawke came swooping from the West,
The French King's Admiral with twenty of the
line

Was sailing forth to sack us, out of Brest.
The ports of France were crowded, the quays of
France a-hum

With thirty thousand soldiers marching to the
drum,

For bragging time was over and fighting time
was come

When Hawke came swooping from the West.

'Twas long past noon of a wild November day

When Hawke came swooping from the West;
He heard the breakers thundering in Quiberon
Bay,

But he flew the flag for battle, line abreast.
Down upon the quicksands roaring out of sight
Fiercely beat the storm-wind, darkly fell the
night,

But they took the foe for pilot and the cannon's
glare for light

When Hawke came swooping from the West.

The Frenchmen turned like a covey down the
wind

When Hawke came swooping from the West;
One he sank with all hands, one he caught and
pinned,

And the shallows and the storm took the rest.
The guns that should have conquered us they
rusted on the shore,

The men that would have mastered us they
drummed and marched no more,

For England was England, and a mighty brood
she bore

When Hawke came swooping from the West.

VÆ VICTIS

BESIDE the placid sea that mirrored her
With the old glory of dawn that cannot die,
The sleeping city began to moan and stir,
As one that fain from an ill dream would
fly ;
Yet more she feared the daylight bringing
nigh
Such dreams as know not sunrise, soon or late,—
Visions of honour lost and power gone by,
Of loyal valour betrayed by factious hate,
And craven sloth that shrank from the labour of
forging fate.

They knew and knew not, this bewildered
crowd,
That up her streets in silence hurrying
passed,
What manner of death should make their
anguish loud,
What corpse across the funeral pyre be cast,
For none had spoken it ; only, gathering fast

As darkness gathers at noon in the sun's eclipse,
A shadow of doom enfolded them, vague and
vast,
And a cry was heard, unfathered of earthly lips,
"What of the ships, O Carthage? Carthage,
what of the ships?"

They reached the wall, and nowise strange it
seemed
To find the gates unguarded and open wide;
They climbed the shoulder, and meet enough
they deemed
The black that shrouded the seaward ram-
part's side
And veiled in drooping gloom the turrets'
pride;
But this was nought, for suddenly down the
slope
They saw the harbour, and sense within
them died;
Keel nor mast was there, rudder nor rope;
It lay like a sea-hawk's eyry spoiled of life and
hope.

Beyond, where dawn was a glittering carpet,
rolled
From sky to shore on level and endless seas,
Hardly their eyes discerned in a dazzle of gold
That here in fifties, yonder in twos and
threes,

The ships they sought, like a swarm of
drowning bees
By a wanton gust on the pool of a mill-dam
hurled,
Floated forsaken of life-giving tide and
breeze,
Their oars broken, their sails for ever furled,
For ever deserted the bulwarks that guarded the
wealth of the world.

A moment yet, with breathing quickly drawn
And hands agrip, the Carthaginian folk
Stared in the bright untroubled face of dawn,
And strove with vehement heaped denial to
choke
Their sure surmise of fate's impending
stroke;
Vainly—for even now beneath their gaze
A thousand delicate spires of distant smoke
Reddened the disc of the sun with a stealthy
haze,
And the smouldering grief of a nation burst with
the kindling blaze.

“O dying Carthage!” so their passion raved,
“Would nought but these the conqueror's
hate assuage?
If these be taken, how may the land be saved
Whose meat and drink was empire, age by
age?”
And bitter memory cursed with idle rage

The greed that coveted gold above renown,
The feeble hearts that feared their heritage,
The hands that cast the sea-kings' sceptre down
And left to alien brows their famed ancestral
crown.

The endless noon, the endless evening through,
All other needs forgetting, great or small,
They drank despair with thirst whose torment
grew
As the hours died beneath that stifling pall.
At last they saw the fires to blackness fall
One after one, and slowly turned them home,
A little longer yet their own to call
A city enslaved, and wear the bonds of Rome,
With weary hearts foreboding all the woe to
come.

VITAI LAMPADA

THERE's a breathless hush in the Close to-night—
Ten to make and the match to win—
A bumping pitch and a blinding light,
An hour to play and the last man in.
And it's not for the sake of a ribboned coat,
Or the selfish hope of a season's fame,
But his Captain's hand on his shoulder smote
“Play up! play up! and play the game!”

The sand of the desert is sodden red,—
Red with the wreck of a square that broke;—
The Gatling's jammed and the colonel dead
And the regiment blind with dust and smoke.
The river of death has brimmed his banks,
And England's far, and Honour a name,
But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks,
“Play up! play up! and play the game!”

This is the word that year by year
While in her place the School is set
Every one of her sons must hear,
And none that hears it dare forget.
This they all with a joyful mind
Bear through life like a torch in flame,
And falling fling to the host behind—
“Play up! play up! and play the game!”

A BALLAD OF JOHN NICHOLSON

It fell in the year of Mutiny,
At darkest of the night,
John Nicholson by Jalándhar came,
On his way to Delhi fight.

And as he by Jalándhar came,
He thought what he must do,
And he sent to the Rajah fair greeting,
To try if he were true.

“God grant your Highness length of days,
And friends when need shall be ;
And I pray you send your Captains hither,
That they may speak with me.”

On the morrow through Jalándhar town
The Captains rode in state ;
They came to the house of John Nicholson,
And stood before the gate.

The chief of them was Mehtab Singh,
He was both proud and sly ;
His turban gleamed with rubies red,
He held his chin full high.

He marked his fellows how they put
Their shoes from off their feet ;
“ Now wherefore make ye such ado
These fallen lords to greet ?

“ They have ruled us for a hundred years,
In truth I know not how,
But though they be fain of mastery
They dare not claim it now.”

Right haughtily before them all
The durbar hall he trod,
With rubies red his turban gleamed,
His feet with pride were shod.

They had not been an hour together,
A scanty hour or so,
When Mehtab Singh rose in his place
And turned about to go.

Then swiftly came John Nicholson
Between the door and him,
With anger smouldering in his eyes,
That made the rubies dim.

“ You are over-hasty, Mehtab Singh,”—
Oh, but his voice was low !
He held his wrath with a curb of iron
That furrowed cheek and brow.

“ You are over-hasty, Mehtab Singh,
When that the rest are gone,
I have a word that may not wait
To speak with you alone.”

The Captains passed in silence forth
And stood the door behind ;
To go before the game was played
Be sure they had no mind.

But there within John Nicholson
Turned him on Mehtab Singh,
“ So long as the soul is in my body
You shall not do this thing.

“ Have ye served us for a hundred years
And yet ye know not why ?
We brook no doubt of our mastery,
We rule until we die.

“ Were I the one last Englishman
Drawing the breath of life,
And you the master-rebel of all
That stir this land to strife—

“ Were I,” he said, “ but a Corporal,
And you a Rajput King,
So long as the soul was in my body
You should not do this thing.

“Take off, take off, those shoes of pride,
Carry them whence they came;
Your Captains saw your insolence,
And they shall see your shame.”

When Mehtab Singh came to the door
His shoes they burned his hand,
For there in long and silent lines
He saw the Captains stand.

When Mehtab Singh rode from the gate
His chin was on his breast:
The Captains said, “When the strong command
Obedience is best.”

THE GUIDES AT CABUL, 1879

SONS of the Island race, wherever ye dwell,
Who speak of your fathers' battles with lips
that burn,
The deed of an alien legion hear me tell,
And think not shame from the hearts ye
tamed to learn,
When succour shall fail and the tide for a
season turn,
To fight with a joyful courage, a passionate
pride,
To die at the last as the Guides at Cabul died.

For a handful of seventy men in a barrack of mud,
Foodless, waterless, dwindling one by one,
Answered a thousand yelling for English blood
With stormy volleys that swept them gunner
from gun,
And charge on charge in the glare of the
Afghan sun,
Till the walls were shattered wherein they
crouched at bay,
And dead or dying half of the seventy lay.

Twice they had taken the cannon that wrecked
their hold,

Twice toiled in vain to drag it back,
Thrice they toiled, and alone, wary and bold,
Whirling a hurricane sword to scatter the rack,
Hamilton, last of the English, covered their
track.

“Never give in !” he cried, and he heard them
shout,

And grappled with death as a man that knows
not doubt.

And the Guides looked down from their smoul-
dering barrack again,

And behold, a banner of truce, and a voice
that spoke :

“Come, for we know that the English all are
slain,

We keep no feud with men of a kindred folk ;
Rejoice with us to be free of the conqueror’s
yoke.”

Silence fell for a moment, then was heard

A sound of laughter and scorn, and an answering
word.

“Is it we or the lords we serve who have earned
this wrong,

That ye call us to flinch from the battle they
bade us fight ?

We that live—do ye doubt that our hands are
strong ?

They that are fallen—ye know that their
blood was bright !

Think ye the Guides will barter for lust of
the light

The pride of an ancient people in warfare bred,
Honour of comrades living, and faith to the
dead ?

Then the joy that spurs the warrior's heart

To the last thundering gallop and sheer leap

Came on the men of the Guides : they flung apart

The doors not all their valour could longer
keep ;

They dressed their slender line ; they breathed
deep,

And with never a foot lagging or head bent

To the clash and clamour and dust of death they
went.

THE GAY GORDONS

(Dargai, Oct. 20th, 1897)

Who's for the Gathering, who's for the Fair ?

(Gay goes the Gordon to a fight)

The bravest of the brave are at deadlock there,

(Highlanders ! march ! by the right !)

There are bullets by the hundred buzzing in the
air,

There are bonny lads lying on the hillside bare ;

But the Gordons know what the Gordons dare

When they hear the pipers playing !

The happiest English heart to-day

(Gay goes the Gordon to a fight)

Is the heart of the Colonel, hide it as he may ;

(Steady there ! steady on the right !)

He sees his work and he sees the way,

He knows his time and the word to say,

And he's thinking of the tune that the Gordons
play

When he sets the pipers playing !

Rising, roaring, rushing like the tide,

(Gay goes the Gordon to a fight)

They're up through the fire-zone, not to be denied ;

(Bayonets ! and charge ! by the right !)

Thirty bullets straight where the rest went wide,

And thirty lads are lying on the bare hillside ;

But they passed in the hour of the Gordons' pride,

To the skirl of the pipers' playing.

"HE FELL AMONG THIEVES"

"YE have robbed," said he, "ye have slaughtered
and made an end ;

Take your ill-got plunder, and bury the dead :
What will ye more of your guest and sometime
friend ?"

"Blood for our blood," they said.

He laughed : "If one may settle the score for five
I am ready ; but let the reckoning stand till
day :

I have loved the sunlight as dearly as any alive."

"You shall die at dawn," said they.

He flung his empty revolver down the slope ;

He climbed alone to the eastward edge of the
trees ;

All night long in a dream untroubled of hope

He brooded, clasping his knees.

He did not hear the monotonous roar that fills

The ravine where the Yassin river sullenly
flows ;

He did not see the starlight on the Laspur hills,
Or the far Affghan snows.

He saw the April noon on his books aglow,
The wisteria trailing in at the window wide ;
He heard his father's voice from the terrace below
Calling him down to ride.

He saw the grey little church across the park,
The mounds that hide the loved and honoured
dead ;
The Norman arch, the chancel softly dark,
The brasses black and red.

He saw the School Close, sunny and green,
The runner beside him, the stand by the
parapet wall,
The distant tape, and the crowd roaring between
His own name over all.

He saw the dark wainscot and timbered roof,
The long tables, and the faces merry and
keen ;
The College Eight and their trainer dining
aloof,
The Dons on the daïs serene.

He watched the liner's stem ploughing the foam,
He felt her trembling speed and the thrash of
her screw ;
He heard her passengers' voices talking of home,
He saw the flag she flew.

And now it was dawn. He rose strong on his
feet,

And strode to his ruined camp below the wood ;
He drank the breath of the morning cool and sweet ;
His murderers round him stood.

Light on the Laspur hills was broadening fast,
The blood-red snow-peaks chilled to a dazzling
white ;

He turned, and saw the golden circle at last,
Cut by the Eastern height.

"O glorious Life, Who dwellest in earth and
sun,

I have lived, I praise and adore Thee."

A sword swept.

Over the pass the voices one by one
Faded, and the hill slept.

IONICUS

WITH failing feet and shoulders bowed
 Beneath the weight of happier days,
 He lagged among the heedless crowd,
 Or crept along suburban ways.
 But still through all his heart was young,
 His mood a joy that nought could mar,
 A courage, a pride, a rapture, sprung
 Of the strength and splendour of England's war.

From ill-requited toil he turned
 To ride with Picton and with Pack,
 Among his grammars inly burned
 To storm the Afghan mountain-track.
 When midnight chimed, before Quebec
 He watched with Wolfe till the morning star;
 At noon he saw from *Victory's* deck
 The sweep and splendour of England's war.

Beyond the book his teaching sped,
 He left on whom he taught the trace
 Of kinship with the deathless dead,
 And faith in all the Island race.
 He passed: his life a tangle seemed,
 His age from fame and power was far;
 But his heart was high to the end, and dreamed
 Of the sound and splendour of England's war.

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SITTING at times over a hearth that burns
With dull domestic glow,
My thought, leaving the book, gratefully turns
To you who planned it so.

Not of the great only you deigned to tell,—
The stars by which we steer—
But lights out of the night that flashed, and fell
To night again, are here.

Such as were those, dogs of an elder day,
Who sacked the golden ports,
And those later who dared grapple their prey
Beneath the harbour forts :

Some with flag at the fore, sweeping the world
To find an equal fight,
And some who joined war to their trade, and
hurled
Ships of the line in flight.

Whether their fame centuries long should ring
They cared not over-much,
But cared greatly to serve God and the king,
And keep the Nelson touch ;

And fought to build Britain above the tide
Of wars and windy fate ;
And passed content, leaving to us the pride
Of lives obscurely great.

LAUDABUNT ALII

(After Horace)

LET others praise, as fancy wills,
Berlin beneath her trees,
Or Rome upon her seven hills,
Or Venice by her seas;
Stamboul by double tides embraced,
Or green Damascus in the waste.

For me there's nought I would not leave
For the good Devon land,
Whose orchards down the echoing cleeve
Bedewed with spray-drift stand,
And hardly bear the red fruit up
That shall be next year's cider-cup.

You too, my friend, may wisely mark
How clear skies follow rain,
And, lingering in your own green park
Or drilled on Laffan's Plain,
Forget not with the festal bowl
To soothe at times your weary soul.

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